

Message Text

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22 MAR 77 QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 2579

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GR, US

SUB: AMBASSADOR'S DISCUSSION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER ON CLIFFORD
MISSION AND GREEK/TURKISH RELATIONS

1. AMBASSADOR AND DCM SAW FOREIGN MINISTER BITSIOS EARLY LAST
EVENING FOLLOWING AMBASSADOR'S RETURN OVER WEEKEND FROM CONSUL-
TATIONS IN WASHINGTON. AMBASSADOR BEGAN BY SAYING THAT BECAUSE
BITSIOS UNDOUBTEDLY HAD A FULL REPORT FROM AMBASSADOR
ALEXANDRAKIS ON HIS MEETINGS WITH CLIFFORD AND NIMETZ, HE
THOUGHT THE BEST WAY TO PROCEED WOULD BE TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS
BITSIOS MIGHT HAVE ON WHAT ALEXANDRAKIS HAD REPORTED.

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2. BITSIOS' FIRST QUESTION WAS WHETHER THE USG ASSESSMENT OF THE
SITUATION EXAMINED BY CLIFFORD HAD DEVELOPED ANY FURTHER SINCE
CLIFFORD'S MEETING WITH ALEXANDRAKIS LAST THURSDAY. AMBASSADOR
REPLIED THAT AS OF TIME HE LEFT WASHINGTON IT HAD NOT. AMBASSADOR
SAID HE THOUGHT FINAL DECISIONS ON CLIFFORD'S RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD
NOT BE MADE UNTIL AFTER THE SECRETARY'S RETURN FROM MOSCOW SO AS

TO ALLOW TIME FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION AND FOR CONGRESS TO DIGEST CLIFFORD'S PRESENTATION TO IT. THE NEW ADMINISTRATION BELIEVES IT IMPORTANT TO HAVE A UNIFIED USG POLICY ON PROBLEMS AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN, AND THERE IS STILL FURTHER REVIEW REQUIRED ON SOME OF THE LINES THAT POLICY SHOULD TAKE.

3. BITSIOS SAID THAT FROM ALEXANDRAKIS' REPORTING THE GOG HAD A CLEAR PICTURE OF THE PERSONAL REACTIONS OF CLIFFORD AND HIS ASSOCIATES TO THEIR TRIP BUT DID NOT KNOW HOW THE TURKISH PRESENTATION OF GOT VIEWS AND INTENTIONS HAD AFFECTED THE US PERCEPTION OF THE SITUATION. WHAT, FOR INSTANCE, HAD BEEN THE US REACTION TO THE TURKISH DENIAL THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AEGEAN ARMY WAS A THREAT TO GREEK ISLANDS, OR TO ITS EXPLANATION OF WHY TURKEY HAD RENEGED ON THE BERN AGREEMENT ON CONTINENTAL SHELF NEGOTIATIONS? THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE US HAD BEEN INFLUENCED BY THE TURKISH ARGUMENTS WAS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THE OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF SITUATION.

4. THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THE TURKISH SIDE HAD EXPRESSED SURPRISE DURING THE FIRST MEETINGS BY CLIFFORD'S RECITATION OF GREEK CONCERNS AND ON THE SECOND DAY OF TALKS, THE TURKS HAD MADE A DETAILED REBUTTAL OF THE GREEK ALLEGATIONS AND CHARGES. THE USG WAS CONTINUING TO EXAMINE CERTAIN FACTS AND VIEWS BROUGHT UP BY BOTH SIDES AND HAD NOT YET REACHED FINAL CONCLUSIONS. REGARDING THE CONTINENTAL SHELF, FOR INSTANCE, THE US HAD NOT TAKEN A POSITION ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE DISPUTE BUT HOPED THAT BOTH SIDES WOULD EXERCISE MAXIMUM RESTRAINT AND NEGOTIATE IN GOOD FAITH.

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5. BITSIOS INTERJECTED THAT GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS HAD DETERIORATED SINCE CLIFFORD'S VISIT AND THAT AS THINGS WERE DEVELOPING IT WAS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT THE TWO SIDES TO NEGOTIATE FRUITFULLY. WASHINGTON CAN BE EXCUSED FOR NOT UNDERSTANDING THE INTENSE EMOTIONS GREEKS FEEL AFTER 500 YEARS OF TROUBLES WITH THE TURKS, AND THEREFORE IT IS HARD FOR THE US TO UNDERSTAND WHY THE GOG CANNOT SIMPLY ACCEPT CERTAIN CONCESSIONS FOR THE SAKE OF A SETTLEMENT. BUT NO GREEK GOVERNMENT COULD SURVIVE IF IT SAID IN EFFECT TO THE TURKS, "BECAUSE YOU ARE STRONGER WE WILL LET YOU HAVE THIS AND THAT". ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GOG COULD LIVE WITH CONCESSIONS MADE ON THE BASIS OF THIRD-PARTY MEDIATION, AND THAT IS WHY IT HAD SUBMITTED THE MATTER TO THE WORLD COURT.

6. RESPONDING TO THE AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT THAT THE TURKS HAVE MADE THE ARGUMENT THAT IN THE PAST FIFTY YEARS IT HAS BEEN THE GREEKS AND NOT THE TURKS WHO HAVE BEEN EXPANSIONIST, BITSIOS SAID THE GREEKS' MAIN CONCERN WAS NOT HISTORY BUT WHAT APPEARED TO BE A CLEAR AND PRESENT THREAT TO GREEK RIGHTS AND INTEREST.

IN EVALUATING TURKISH INTENTIONS THE GOG MUST TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION WHAT THE TURKS DID ON CYPRUS, DEMIREL'S STATEMENTS ABOUT THE ISLANDS NOT BEING GREEK BUT "AEGEAN", AND OTHER INDICATIONS THAT TURKEY IS IN AN EXPANSIONIST PHASE. BITSIOS SAID THAT WHILE GREEK INTELLIGENCE RESOURCES ARE NOT AS EXTENSIVE OR ACCURATE AS THOSE OF THE US, TURKEY APPEARS TO HAVE THE CAPABILITY OF MOUNTING A SIZEABLE ATTACK ON GREEK ISLANDS, AND THIS MUST BE OF CONCERN TO THE GOG. IN THIS CONNECTION HE ASKED WHETHER THE AMBASSADOR HAD ANY FURTHER NEWS ON WHETHER THE USG MIGHT ISSUE A NEW AND STRONGER STATMENT ON THE AEGEAN SIMILAR TO KISSINGER'S LETTER TO BITSIOS OF APRIL 10, 1976.

7. THE AMBASSADOR COMMENTED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THIS MATTER WAS STILL UNDER STUDY. SPEAKING PERSONALLY, HE THOUGHT THERE WOULD BE CONSIDERABLE RELUCTANCE TO ISSUE ANY NEW LETTER ALONG THOSE LINES NOW. REGARDING THE CAPABILITIES OF THE AEGEAN ARMY AND THE TURKISH
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AMPHIBIOUS FORCE, THE AMBASSADOR, DRAWING ON PARAGRAPHS 1 - 3 OF STATE 55318 (NOTAL), SAID THAT OUR ASSESSMENT SHOWED THOSE FORCES TO BE CONSIDERABLY SMALLER THAN THE GREEK ESTIMATES. NEVERTHELESS, THE USG UNDERSTOOD GREEK CONCERNS AND WAS FOLLOWING THE SITUATION CAREFULLY.

8. THE AMBASSADOR SAID THAT A CENTRAL CONCEPT OF THE CLIFFORD REPORT AS HE UNDERSTOOD IT AND WITH WHICH HE AGREES WAS THAT WASHINGTON SHOULD SEEK TO MAXIMIZE ITS INFLUENCE WITH THE GOT BY BEING ABLE TO OFFER INCENTIVES AND COMPENSATION FOR CONSTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR AND TO WITHHOLD BENEFITS IF TURKEY BEHAVED BADLY. CLIFFORD, THEREFORE, HAD RECOMMENDED ENDORSEMENT IN PRINCIPLE OF THE TURKISH DCA WITHOUT IMMEDIATE CONGRESSIONAL ACTION ON IT, AS WELL AS A CONTINUATION OF SOMEWHAT INCREASED INTERIM MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO TURKEY. BY WORKINGCLOSELY WITH GREECE, TURKEY AND CYPRUS WITHIN THIS FRAMEWORK, WE THOUGHT IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR US TO HELP BRING ABOUT AN ACCEPTABLE RESOLUTION OF THE MAJOR PROBLEMS IN THE AREA. BITSIOS SHOOK HIS HEAD SKEPTICALLY BUT MADE NO FURTHER COMMENT.

9. OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED WITH BITSIOS ARE BEING REPORTED BY SEPTELS.
KUBISCH

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